

i want to go home (but i am home) by ratherbeblue

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Summary:

Eddie and Richie made a promise to each other seventeen years ago that they both forgot about, luckily the New York City Clerk's offices keep extensive paper trails.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Based off of the tumblr ask:
<https://ransonejames.tumblr.com/post/188403944778/uhhh-au-where-reddie-date-as-teens-in-derry-and-at>

Eddie Kasprak and Myra Moore decided to get married on a Friday.

It's him that asks, though it's really more of a formality, something to tell her friends and family later, and he doesn't make a fuss of it. He takes her to the mid-range restaurant on the island where they had had their first dinner date and presents her, after dinner but before dessert, with the ring.

It's a nice ring, probably too expensive, and one that Eddie had chosen more out how it would look to his coworkers than how much Myra would have liked it. That probably should have stuck out a little more to him as a warning sign, but two years into their relationship he had become a master at ignoring those.

He and Myra had fallen into their relationship quickly enough after Eddie's mother had passed, and the coincidence was not lost on him. They had been working together for a while at that point, she admired his soft personality and promise of upward mobility within the company, and he admired her nurturing nature and the simple fact that she already admired him. It was easy to fit the puzzle of piece of Myra into where the puzzle piece of Sonia once was. Now she worried about him and he was kept safe by that. He did things to make her happy, like always coming home on time and presenting her with gifts she didn't even have to ask for. In turn she kept his seven-day pill dispenser stocked and made him warm meals to come home to.

They both quietly danced around the issues that were always simmering below the surface, knowing that as long as nothing disturbed them to boiling it would be fine.

So they allowed none of that to happen, instead they moved the relationship along as if on a conveyor belt, dating, moving in, and now, getting engaged.

The engagement was nice enough, and neither party had much reason to wait so planning began almost immediately, the two decided on a date, reserved the venue, and Eddie looked into all the paperwork necessary.

A Marriage license in New York City, is good for 60 consecutive days following the 24-hour waiting period after which it is applied for.

Eddie, always the pragmatist, walked into the Queens County Clerk office on a Thursday afternoon, exactly 30 days prior to the scheduled ceremony, to file for a marriage license.

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The call came on a Tuesday.

“Hello Edward, this is Janet calling from the New York City Clerk’s office, I’m afraid there’s been an issue with your marriage license.”

Janet was, all things considered, very nice and understanding about the whole situation. Much more so than Eddie, who had been immediately angered by the clear lack of organization in the system that had somehow declared him married *seventeen years* ago. She had assured him that all he needed to do was come down to the office with a few more methods of identification or the divorce papers and they could get it all squared away.

Divorce papers , Eddie had wanted to scoff at her. Yes, let me go get those divorce papers for this marriage I was part of...when I was *eighteen* .

The thought itself was so ridiculous he couldn’t even put it into words, he had never even been near New York when he was that age, he was still stuck in...

Whatever, even if he had been in New York at the time, what kind of maniac would give a child a marriage certificate?

Who would he even have married? He could barely remember anyone he went to highschool with, certainly he would be able to remember if he had a girlfriend at the time, one serious enough to get married to. Eddie couldn't wait to have this whole nightmare behind him, then he and Myra could get married and everything would go back to normal.

On Wednesday, things did not go back to normal.

Eddie decided not to tell Myra. He told himself it was because she would only worry about it and he wanted to spare her, but he knew that wasn't really true. Eddie, though still unhappy with the disorganization of County Clerk's offices was a little more relieved than he wanted to be by the interruption of what was supposed to be the rest of his life.

So Eddie didn't tell her, instead he said he would be working late and hoped the lie didn't sound as sour and cliché as it felt leaving his tongue. Myra, for her part, didn't bat an eyelash. And to be fair, if she had suspected the lie, her sweet nature would probably lead her to the conclusion of him working on some wedding-adjacent surprise for her. Afterall, Eddie had been the perfect boyfriend, and now fiancé to her up until this point.

Eddie left for the end of his shift at 5:15 on the dot as he always did, giving him 45 minutes to take care of anything that needed to be taken care of. He walked into the Clerk's Office and waited in line until he reached a middle aged woman with permed hair and 90% of a set of acrylic nails that could help him. She listened to his story, took the copies of his birth certificate and social security card and went to look up the marriage license in question.

About five minutes later she returned with a not so promising look on her face as well as a few papers.

She explained to him that there had been no mistake, showed him a copy of the marriage certificate dated April 14th, 1994 along with a Xerox copy of his original birth certificate and his highschool driver's license.

The worst part about the whole thing was the other name on the

license, a name that before it even registered in his brain made his whole body shake and head throb.

Richard H. Tozier.

He barely remembered to grab the stack of papers from the woman's hands before walking straight out of the office and into his car.

Once he was there he tossed the papers carelessly into the backseat, shaking hands reaching for the bottle of alprazolam in his console and willing himself not to scream.

Everytime he blinked a new flash of *something* went by, too fast to catch, but enough to admit that the office was right, there was no mistake, at least not on a clerical level.

Once he had calmed himself down enough to drive he started the car, sent a text letting the company know he wouldn't be back tomorrow, and drove home.

The whole way there felt like a bad trip, each traffic light flash brought on another vision or sound.

Something about a bridge

Beep-Beep

Sticky hands

Eddie my love...

Glasses with too thick frames

Look at me

Long grass in the breeze

Miles of concrete road

Falling...

No, *jumping* from a cliff, into the quarry.

It was all swirling chaos in his mind, but something in him must remember enough to put things together because he gets home, on auto-pilot, packs a bag, googles the name on the certificate, and books a flight. Mercifully, Myra was not there.

Three hours later Eddie woke up in coach feeling somehow more at peace than he had been in years and at the same time one millisecond away from completely self destructing.

2. Interlude: 1989

1989

What was left of the summer after Bev moved passed by slowly. A certain level of somberness filled the air around each member of the loser's club, and although they had each other it still certainly weighed on them.

Losing Bev, the clown, the pact they all made.

They tried to do the same things they had done before, hang out at the clubhouse, catch the last warm summer days at the quarry, but it was all tinged with sadness, a blue haze surrounding them.

Beverly's absence had left a cut on their hearts deeper than the ones on their hands, deep and jagged with no chance of healing anytime soon. What didn't help was her complete lack of correspondence after she had gone. They all knew she had seen something in the deadlights, something terrible, maybe unspeakably so, but they also knew, deep in their hearts and souls, that Bev wouldn't just leave them like that. Not with no chance of ever hearing from her again.

They tried not to think about it, tried to hope and believe with everything they had that Bev was okay, that maybe there was just some curse that caused letters to be lost and calls to be dropped.

Most of all Eddie hoped, beyond anything, and in that way that only the two of them shared, that she really had gotten away okay. That she would never have to even think about her dad again and that she got all the love in the world that she needed, and moreso. He hoped, knowing that it is mostly impossible, and slightly improbable, that she could do that without them, because she had to now.

He hoped that maybe one day he'd be as brave as her, even though right now he was far from it.

Eddie didn't even like to walk around alone anymore, not after being caught alone with It. He started taking the long way around so he didn't have to go anywhere near *that house* again, started making

plans with Bill or Stan, who also didn't like to be alone, or Richie, so they had an excuse to walk together.

When it was just him and Richie, he always walked him home.

Richie was a little quieter now, and Eddie was too.

Richie didn't like to go to the arcade anymore, he didn't say why and nobody asked, it didn't seem right to, they all had things that they'd rather avoid, especially after that summer.

So Eddie didn't like being alone and Richie didn't like going to the arcade anymore, and no one liked being back where the memories of that summer hung heavy and dark like a curtain over their once innocent memories. Because of this it made sense that they started spending more time together.

Notes for the Chapter:

I'll be posting the rest of the chapters with flashback interludes like this in between because I started writing one and realized there was too much to weave in organically.

3. Chapter 2

Eddie landed at the Mccarran National Airport and promptly realized he had no plan.

He had a stack of paperwork, a duffle bag filled to the brim with clothing, prescriptions, and travel sized toiletries, and the name of a comedy club where Richie ‘Trashmouth’ Tozier is in the middle of a weeklong engagement, but he had no plan.

This was the exact opposite of how he normally ran his life. Eddie Kaspbrak at age 35 normally wakes up every morning to the same alarm he’s had set for the last 10 years, eats the same breakfast (except on Sundays where he chooses from a pre-approved list of local brunch spots that have been thoroughly vetted over his years in the city) and generally goes about the day the same way he always does.

On the rare occasion that he absolutely must travel he plans every aspect, every minute detail, every item on the agenda down to the minute. Never in his life has he ever gotten on a plane somewhere where he didn’t have so much as a hotel room.

Eddie turned his phone back on once he realized, standing in the much too bright, slot machine filled terminal, that he had nowhere to sleep. He was greeted by a slew of missed calls and texts from Myra, understandable as he left without so much as a word to her. His phone also told him it was past midnight in Vegas, meaning it would be even later in New York, surely she was asleep by now. But still, the gnawing guilt in Eddie’s stomach conjured an image of Myra, up and pacing still at well past 3 in the morning, waiting for any sign that he was alive and well.

The guilt won out and he sent a text blindly, not having the stomach to read the backlog and properly reply.

Emergency at work, had to go out of town for a client.

The text really made no sense, there was no reason for him to ever personally go out of town on a client’s behalf, and on top of that

Myra knew that he always put up a fight about having to go out of town for work.

Luckily the phone didn't immediately start ringing so Eddie counted his blessings and started to look up cheap hotels on the strip. After the rigorous 15 minutes of option weighing his sleep deprived mind could stand he decided on the 4-star and \$36 a night (minus hidden resort fees) Tropicana. It also happened to be the same hotel and casino which housed The Laugh Factory, the very club where Richie was supposed to be performing this week. Must be fate.

The taxi ride to the hotel was mercifully silent, the only noise the traffic around the car and the driver's preferred radio station playing obscure songs Eddie had never heard before or cared to again. It only lasted about 15 minutes but that was enough for the hypnotizing lights of the Las Vegas strip to put him on edge again.

What was he *doing* here?

Sure he knew logically that he had two copies of divorce papers in his briefcase for this guy to sign, but why didn't he just email him? Try to find his number? And why, even after seeing his name and picture, could he not remember a damn thing about him? The man, and Eddie still hadn't allowed himself to think too much about *that* aspect of it, he decided to marry.

Maybe it was just a joke between two friends, a prank, or a dare most likely. But who goes through that much trouble for a joke?

Maybe a guy who became a comedian? His mind tries to supply helpfully.

Shaking that thought away Eddie tried to remember anything from highschool, his childhood, *Derry* in general, but finds himself coming up hopelessly blank.

Sure he can remember taking classes and living in his house with his mom, riding his bike, but that's where things get blurry. Friends, hobbies, fun, none of it fit easily into the puzzle in his mind, he can't even remember what he himself was like as a kid, maybe he was always the same...he kind of hopes he wasn't, otherwise it's no

surprise that he had no friends.

Still, Eddie did have to congratulate himself for taking the knowledge that he was not only married to someone he didn't know, but also that that someone was another man, so well. And Eddie guessed he had always kind of known, always felt that maybe, if things were a little different, if he were different, braver, allowed to want things, that maybe he would end up in the company of men. But that thought was always so nebulous, so far away, it was on par with kids who say they want to be astronauts, and almost none of them ever do.

He was jostled from his thoughts by the sudden stop of the Taxi driver, the hotel, by Vegas standards, was pretty nondescript looking from this angle. Eddie paid the driver, picked up his duffle, which he had not bothered to store in the trunk, and walked in.

As normal as the outside looked, it was obvious from the second he walked in where he was. The sound of clinking slots and rolling dice filled the air even at such a late hour.

Check-In was uneventful, Eddie handed over his credit card and ID, tried hard not to make eye contact with the discount flyer for Richie 'Trashmouth' Tozier on the receptionist's desk, and was handed a small paper folder with two room keys in it.

The exhaustion of the day caught up with Eddie as soon as he got into his room, and within minutes he had gotten rid of his shoes and pants, brushed his teeth, and fallen into a dreamless sleep.

Eddie woke at 9am on the dot, Myra had seemingly given him the benefit of the doubt, not calling until 12 her time. Eddie let the phone ring, not sure what he would even be able to say to her. *Hey, honey, sorry I left, you see I just found out I have a husband? Bit of an inconvenience considering we're engaged, anyway, I'm off to see his comedy show, bye!*

That would go over well, there wasn't one part of this entire situation that wouldn't be heart attack inducing for her and Eddie didn't know how or where he would even start trying to explain it. She would see the credit card bill, know where he had gone and where he was

staying, if it weren't for her frequent bouts of agoraphobia she would probably already be there, dragging him by the ear all the way to the otherside of the country. She would probably even manage to find Richie and get the divorce papers signed. Maybe he did need her here, maybe he was out of his depths out here alone...

No, he could do this, he had gotten this far. All he had to do was hope this guy wasn't a total asshole about the situation. Maybe they could have a few laughs, a drink, maybe Richie remembers something about how this all happened, maybe Richie would-

Beep-Beep, Eddie.

The beeping in his mind brought him back to his frantically ringing phone, Myra must have tried again after getting nothing and Eddie considered just turning his phone off, but no, he could handle this, surely.

"Eddie Kaspbrak speaking." He winced at the practiced sound of his greeting.

"Eddie? Eddie, where are you? I called your work and they didn't know where you went either, are you in trouble? Just tell me, Eddie, it's okay." Myra was frantic right off the bat, practicing the kind of pleading that parents give when their children do something wrong. *I'm not mad, I just want to know why you did it...*

"N-no, My, I'm not in trouble, I just had to take care of something." *It's for you, don't be mad, please.*

"What? And why didn't you tell me? Eddie, I've been worried sick, I come home to an empty house, no note, no answer on your phone, I thought you had been kidnapped, or worse! How could you do this to me?"

Her words barrel over his, the way they always can, so easily that when they don't Eddie knows it's only because she's allowing it. But right now, he's over 2,000 miles away and she can't do anything about that, not right now. His words are harsher than usual when he replies.

“Myra, calm down! I’m talking to you, aren’t I? I’m fine, just trust me.”

“How do I know you’re not tied down in some room right now, how do I know they aren’t just making you say that?”

“Who, Myra?” He doesn’t want to engage with that, but he has too, he can’t help himself.

“The mob!” She cries. “I keep telling you this city isn’t safe Eddie, that’s it, when you get back here we’re moving.”

“If I’ve been kidnapped by the mob how am I going to get back there to move?” She’s pulled the conversation all the way around so that he’s not even mad anymore, just vaguely annoyed and amused.

“Well I’m sure you’ll figure something out!” She snaps.

“Myra...”

She sighs.

“I know.” And she does, Eddie and her have this dance all the time, at the beginning it really scared him, how easily she and him could bounce anxieties back and forth at each other, always on the verge of tailspinning. But then one of them would slip, say something ridiculous, and they would usually laugh about it, the vague fear of whatever they had been discussing only left hanging like a fog that could easily be blown away.

“Look, I’ll be back soon, really soon. I promise, okay? You just have to trust me this time.” He pleaded one last time, voice steady.

There was a pregnant pause.

“Okay.”

Eddie could tell it caused her physical pain to agree, even if just temporarily. Myra had always had to be right, always knew best, especially when it came to Eddie.

Eddie thanked her, they exchanged goodbyes, and then Eddie was

alone, again.

The harsh AC of the hotel room made him suddenly aware of his lack of clothing.

He showered, enjoying the surprisingly good heat and water pressure for such a cheap room, then dressed, some of his more casual clothes, jeans and a medium blue polo shirt. Myra had taken over buying his clothes when they started living together, and it made things easier for sure. He felt like a bit of a cartoon character, waking up to put on the same jeans of which he had 5 pairs, and the same shirt, which he had in 5 different colors, like a little alien capsule wardrobe that took all of the worries out of dressing.

Once he was dressed he opened his laptop, took care of several work related matters that he had neglected during his impropetu journey, and cleared out his email inbox. With that done, Eddie had no more plans for the day, at least not until 7pm that night when Richie was supposed to do his show.

He still hadn't decided if he was going, not sure if he could stomach sitting in the audience, knowing who he was and at the same time not knowing at all. Weirdly, he mostly felt like if he did it would be unfair to Richie, having someone who you knew once watch you without telling you, it just seemed a little wrong.

So Eddie decided to walk blindly out onto the Las Vegas strip.

As he quickly learned, Vegas was a nightmare for Eddie. He hated gambling, everyone was drunk and loud, even though it was barely midday, there was a heavy cloud of smoke in almost every room and worst of all you couldn't walk 20 yards without hitting a buffet. Buffets were, in Eddie's opinion, possibly the most disgusting invention of man, they were definitely the worst way people have come up with as a means of serving food.

The amounts of bacteria hiding away in every corner of a buffet haunted Eddie just thinking about it. Staphylococcus, Salmonella, E coli, from the food sitting out for hours to the hastily 'washed' trays and utensils. Once, in college, Eddie had finally worked up the courage to go to his school's dining hall only to pick up a fork from

the receptacle that had a piece of spinach seemingly heat blasted onto it by the pressure washers the school had in place of actual dishwashing staff.

He had immediately left, tossing his bagel and pre-packaged fruit cup into the garbage and trying to make it back to the privacy of his dorm without dry heaving.

And then that's all he could think about.

He spent the rest of the day staring blankly at the dancing lights of the Bellagio, refusing to move and ruining people's photos. After a while of that he wandered around, not going into any of the casinos, but oddly enjoying the kitschy, manufactured flair of the city, it was fun in a purposefully gaudy way. Myra would have hated it.

He found an exorbitantly overpriced, but spotless sandwich shop and ate lunch alone, at the deli counter, looking out at the street of people who had come from all over for a bit of mindless fun, and in a way Eddie wished he could do something like that. Wished that it didn't take something like a secret husband that he forgot about to get him out of his own house. Wished that he could be normal.

At 5 he decided to head back to the hotel.

There was almost no one around the venue when he arrived, and it was smaller than he expected, almost intimate for such a big hotel in a city run on showbusiness. There was however one woman that stood out, long blonde hair with tight dark wash jeans and a black architectural blazer, a backstage pass hanging from her neck. She was tapping at her cell phone lazily with one hand, some kind of mixed drink in the other.

He went up to her and she immediately sensed his presence, she looked up at him, she had big, brown eyes and they stopped him instantly in his tracks.

"Are you..." He trailed off, not sure what to ask that would sound remotely close to normal.

"Sandy," She introduced herself, taking pity on him. "I manage the

talent.”

“Oh, I’m Eddie. Hi.” He said lamely, sticking out a hand, weirdly enough making her smile and pocket her phone to shake. “I’m actually looking for him, Richie. We went to highschool together.”

He worries that it sounds too much like a question as she sizes him up, that she’ll know he’s lying by omission or whatever.

“Huh.” She said. Then, she raised her drink in a light cheering motion, downed it and put the glass down on the bar. “You wanna go see him before the show?”

“Oh, um, I don’t want to bother-”

“Oh no, I’m sure he’d love to see you, follow me.”

She didn’t wait for a response, just started moving towards the stairs by the stage, forcing him to follow.

It was altogether much too easy to get into Richie’s dressing room, and Eddie would have made that known in any other circumstance, but he was not in the situation to look a gift horse in the mouth. Not when that horse’s name was Sandy and she had just disappeared into the hall after knocking on the door and pushing him inside, leaving him with a “You’ve got a visitor, Rich.” directed at the other person in the room.

A man, dark haired and wearing oversized glasses, turned to look at him and it was nothing like seeing the photos online.

It hit Eddie like a punch to the gut and he felt his right hand flex close instinctively. He knew the man in front of him, this was *Richie*.

Still, his mouth had a mind of it’s own and he automatically introduced himself.

“Eddie Kaspbrak” He pried open his hand and stuck it out like a peace offering.

Richie looked at his hand, looked at him, face pale and confused, but his eyes were still so blue and clear.

“Right, Eddie...Eds.” Suddenly his face went somehow paler, eyes widened with panic while he looked around for something.

Eddie instinctively jumped out of the way when Richie dove towards the ice bucket like it was a lifeline.

He threw up immediately.

So this is the guy I married.

“Right, nice to see you again too, asshole.”

4. Interlude 1990

Notes for the Chapter:

oh two chapters???

1990

The nightmares didn't stop, they just changed. After a year passed the day they climbed from the sewers together seemed more like a hazy dream than a memory. The clowns and lepers and werewolves melted into faceless, shapeless terrors that made them uneasy and sleepless.

At some point they must have stopped talking about it, between the eighth grade classwork and after school programs they all had other things to think about, as impossible as it seemed, than the time they fought an evil alien clown.

The less they talked about it, the less they remembered, and all Eddie remembered then, when he woke in the middle of the warm summer night, was the ache in his arm and the feeling of being terribly, horrible, completely alone.

It was too late for anyone to be awake, Eddie didn't dare wake his mother, didn't even think about it. How would that look, 14 years old and crawling into his mother's bed after a nightmare, the worst part is that his mother would let him, would hold him close and keep him home from school the next day. Smother him with kindness and attention, making sure he knew how weak and fragile he really was.

So he didn't dare wake his mother, instead, he slid his already greased bedroom window open and shuffled, ever so carefully and practiced, down the slanted porch roof and onto his lawn.

It was warm enough that he didn't need a jacket, so he took off, not quite running, only wearing his plaid pajama shorts, oversized and worn out Transformers T-Shirt, and hastily put on sneakers, no socks.

The first few times he had done this he didn't know where to go, he

just started walking, not really knowing where his feet were dragging him until he ended up outside Bill's house, then Stan's, and once, on his way back, taking the long way, he walked by Richie's and saw the light on.

Richie's room was on the first floor, it took up the back left corner of his house, and he had a habit of leaving his window cracked during the summer.

That first time, Eddie had gingerly made his way towards it, not sure if he would be wanted, but hoping desperately, in his nightmare addled mind, full of adrenaline and fear, that he was.

The light, coming from that ugly novelty dinosaur lamp Richie's had as long as he's known him, cast a warm glow around the room and the lawn where Eddie stood. The window pane, curtains pulled away for now, acted as a strange kind of mirror between them.

Richie was sitting on the edge of his bed, blankets and sheets strewn about like he had been tossing and turning all night, his head in his hands and bare feet pressed solidly into the ground. He looked about as awful as Eddie felt, which in his mind, made it okay for him to do what he did next.

Gingerly, again, he raised a hand to the window, knocking against it slowly.

Richie reacted immediately, straightening up, pushing his glasses back onto his face, which, Eddie could see now, was red and tear streaked.

Richie had let him in that night, they didn't say much in fear of breaking the delicate feeling in the air around them. They simply held each other, like they were much smaller children and it was still okay for them to hold each other like that.

Ever since then, whenever Eddie had a nightmare, he went to Richie.

Sometimes they talked, sometimes they didn't, mostly they just did whatever they had to to occupy the time and space between the nightmares and when, in the presence of someone else, they could

finally fall into a less fitful sleep.

This night seemed like a talking night, Eddie showed up only to find Richie's window already open, dinosaur light already on, and Richie, hanging over the side of his bed, wild hair tossed about and making him look all the more like a mad scientist.

He seemed to be in deep contemplation, face not red with tears, just normal, pale, freckled skin in the golden light of his bedroom.

"I miss Ben..." He said, somewhat inexplicably, at least to Eddie.

"Yeah?"

Eddie knew logically that all of the losers were friends, and he missed Ben too, but he didn't know that Richie and Ben had ever been particularly close.

Ben had moved back in May, his mother, understandably upset about the events of the previous year, had almost immediately started looking for new jobs, and she found one, in New Jersey. It was a sad month for the Losers, their last days as middle schoolers slipping through their fingers before they knew it, the loss of Ben only rubbing salt in the wound of their collective lost youth.

Richie didn't respond, just continued to lay on his bed, head flung over the side upside down, thick frames threatening to fall from his face.

"Hey, Rich." Eddie tried, not sure where he was going, just wanting the melancholy look gone from his friend's face.

"Hmm?"

Eddie looked at him, and he didn't look back, he was still somewhere else, in that big crazy brain of his. Eddie wondered how long he'd been up before he got here, if he had gone to sleep at all, if he tried.

Sometimes Eddie tries to go to sleep alone after a nightmare, it never works. He wondered what Richie does when he has one and Eddie doesn't, because, as much as it would be welcome, he's never shown up outside Eddie's window, never reached or asked for the same kind

of comfort he's so willing to give.

Eddie wondered if he doesn't think he's allowed.

Eddie let the conversation slip away, a light breeze blew in through the window, ruffling Richie's stormcloud of hair.

That got his attention.

Richie rolled off of the bed, barely catching his glasses in the process, and went to close the window.

He did, and then he stood there for a moment, fingertips smudging the clear glass, then tapping out an unreadable rhythm. He looked out at something only he knew to see.

"One of these days, Eds." He said.

Eddie felt his face scrunch up in confusion.

"One of these days, what?"

"I'm gonna take you away, we're gonna get on our bikes, or steal our parent's cars, or hop a train, whatever, we're gonna get out of this town. You and me."

Eddie wanted to say something like "*Yeah, right.*" or "*We wouldn't last a week.*" but the words were stuck in his throat. Stuck like gum to the bottom of a bus seat, unyielding and final as Richie, for the first time that night, looked him in the eye.

Blue, deep, pools that Eddie could drown in, took his words away. Something about that look in his eyes made Eddie think that maybe he was right, maybe he really would.

Notes for the Chapter:

I'm actually having a lot of fun writing these flashbacks, next chapter though, there will be reddie interaction! I promise.

5. Chapter 3

Notes for the Chapter:

Oh they finally interact!?? also, vomit warning for the first line, sorry!

Eddie watched in horror as Richie vomited into the ice bucket, looked back at him, and then did it again, horrible hacking coughs of mostly bile. Now that Eddie's had a good look at him he understood though, if the memories had hit him the same way, all at once, he probably wouldn't look much better.

Eddie pressed a sympathetic hand to his back, rubbing between his shoulder blades in a familiar motion, though he was broader and somehow taller now, Eddie's hand rougher.

Richie stiffened, then relaxed underneath the touch.

"Eddie...Oh my god." He sounded dazed, the words only a whisper falling from his lips. He cleared his throat. "How long has it been?"

"Seventeen years." *Can you believe it?* He doesn't ask. *Does this feel as weird to you as it does to me?*

"And Sandy brought you here? How did she find you?"

"Actually I found her, on accident, kind of." Eddie would have to remind himself to ask about Sandy later, thank her.

Richie just looked confused.

"I was looking for you." He offered.

"Oh, right, well you found me." Richie was still confused, his eyes darted around the room, and Eddie knew he hated making eye contact, but not when it came to him.

"Richie...I forgot too." That made him stop, let out a sigh of relief and finally, look Eddie in the eyes.

“Oh thank god, I mean, if you hadn’t I’d be worried, I mean seventeen years! Not exactly boyfriend of the year material, huh Eds?”

“Husband.” He corrected automatically.

Richie let out a laugh, a little frantic and hysterical.

“Right!”

Eddie let the silence drag for a moment, but Richie was suddenly and, now that Eddie remembered him, uncharacteristically quiet.

“Hey, it’s okay. I shouldn’t have just showed up like this, I’m really sorry.” Eddie told him.

“No, no, don’t apologize, I’m just...I need a minute.” Eddie started to move away, realizing his hand was still on Richie’s back, arm practically wrapped around him as they were now face to face. “No, no stay.”

Eddie did.

“I’m sorry, I just...I can’t believe I fucking forgot. Oh my god, holy shit! Dude, I have a fucking husband, oh my god I forgot I was gay!”

“Really?” Eddie asked, a little confused about how exactly that worked.

Richie smiled though.

“No, I’ve just been really fucking closeted for the last seventeen years. Real depressing, french cinema shit, man. Like I was all alone in my hotel room a few days ago crying to Lady Gaga and I couldn’t figure out why. Oh my god...”

Eddie wrinkled his nose.

“Yeah, that’s pretty fucking sad.”

Richie was looking at him again, still a little dazed, but much more present now. Eddie noticed, for the first time since re-meeting him,

how very very much he had changed, and oddly, stayed the same. His wide cheekbones and mouth were still there, but somehow different, his hair was longer, bangs brushed sideways against his forehead, jaw squarer. Laugh lines marked out the familiar planes of his face like roadmaps to the past though, framing, much like his glasses, his beautiful blue eyes. He was even wearing something that wouldn't have looked out of place on him back in high school, jeans and a t-shirt, with some brightly patterned button up over it all.

Eddie just watched him back for a while, then he reached into his jacket pocket, pulling out a container of Wintergreen Tic Tacs, the same kind he always carried.

"Eddie...always prepared, I do miss the fanny pack though." He said the last bit through chews.

"Of course you'd remember that." Eddie laughed.

"Hey, I remember a lot of things, yeah, it's all coming back to me. I remember the fanny pack, but I also remember...those shorts!"

"Ugh." Eddie shook his head at the memory.

"Come on, many a teenage fantasy started with those shorts."

"Beep-beep, asshole."

"Oh, how he hurts me, this husband of mine. Does this count as spousal abuse?"

"I'll show you spousal abuse, you-"

A knock at the door.

"You better be decent." Sandy called out sardonically as she opened the door. "They want you out there for mic check, Rich."

She seemed to notice the position they were in.

"Everything okay in here?"

Richie cleared his throat, moved to stand up.

“Yeah, yeah. It’s great actually, thanks for bringing him” He reached down an arm to help Eddie get up too. Eddie took it.

Sandy just looked at the two of them again before nodding and turning away.

“See you out there.”

“I like her.” Eddie said, as though that had any bearing here.

“Me too, she’s great, reminds me of home somehow.”

Richie looked out into the hall after her. He was still holding Eddie’s hand.

“Well, I guess you have to go.”

“Yeah.” He agreed. But he didn’t move.

“I should probably go too, I still don’t have a ticket.”

At that Richie seemed to realize something, he finally broke contact to push his hands up and through his hair.

“Oh my god.” He said, for probably the 10th time that evening. “Do not watch the show.”

“What?” Eddie was confused.

“Please, Eddie, just wait for me outside I’ll make it a quick one, just don’t listen to the show.”

He seemed almost...embarrassed. Eddie smiled.

“Well now I’m definitely going to watch it, Richie. It’s like you don’t know me at all. Besides, nothing can be more embarrassing than what we already know about each other.” Twelve years of childhood friendship and a marriage between them, what’s one bad comedy set?

“Okay fine, but I didn’t write it, okay? Just please remember that while you’re watching.”

“Fine, fine, it can’t be that bad though, there are actual paying people

here to see you.”

...

“Okay, I was wrong, I want a divorce.”

Richie let out a whine.

“I told you, I didn’t write it!”

They were in Richie’s dressing room again, Sandy, as Richie left for mic check, had come back and given him a backstage pass and a seat near the back wall of the venue, where she had sat with him through the show.

Eddie liked Sandy, she was funny and sharp, but she was mostly kind. She had to be, Eddie was sure, to manage a guy like Richie for as long as she had, five years. Eddie liked her even more now that he knew there was absolutely nothing happening between them, although he knew logically he had no right to care at all. Sandy knew Richie was gay, even though he had never said it out loud. She actually only brought him back to meet him because she thought he was Richie’s boyfriend trying to be slick about it and wanted to embarrass him a little.

“It’s a good thing you’re gay because some of the shit you just said about women was so inexcusable I can’t believe one of them would ever actually date you.”

“Ah,” Richie clutched his chest. “Again with the hurtful words.”

Eddie pushed at his shoulder.

“And now the physical abuse, they all warned me it was a slippery slope!”

Eddie laughed, Richie laughed too. His teeth are still perfect, Eddie noticed.

“So...” Eddie started, “You heading back to your room now, or?”

Richie looked at him again, like he’s a puzzle and he’s still trying to

work it out.

“I’m actually weirdly starving?”

Eddie realized that he is too, now that all the excitement and anticipation is over with.

“Oh thank god, me too.”

Richie went to grab his jacket from the rack, reaches an arm out to hold the door open for Eddie.

“So, shall we?”

They end up in one of the hotel’s many restaurants and Eddie only had a moment to feel terribly underdressed as Richie talked to the hostess before they were whisked off to a corner table for two.

One look at the menu confirmed his suspicions about the place.

“Richie,” He hissed. “This place is insane, we can’t eat here.”

Eddie, who wasn’t hurting for money, but still kept a meticulous budget, felt a little sick looking at the numbers printed in the leather bound menu book.

“Eddie, my love, don’t worry about it.” He gave a teasing smile. “If you’re paying for dinner in Vegas as a D-list celebrity you’re doing something wrong.”

“Well I wish you had told me that before I spent \$30 on a salad at lunch.”

Richie laughed.

“Stick with me, Eds and you’ll never have to pay for a salad again.”

“My hero.”

“I feel like I should let you know that’s just because there’s no fucking way I’m letting you order a salad.”

Eddie gave him an unimpressed look.

“So your eating habits really haven’t changed since high school, huh.”

A sudden flash of Richie telling him not to be such a girl as he picks from the vegetable tray rather than the bowl of chips at a 6th grade party fills his mind.

“I’ve replaced ice cream with straight whisky?”

“Congratulations.” Eddie snarked.

Neither of them did order a salad though, Richie ordered a massive steak and Eddie went with the more conservative chicken dish.

“You know, I looked up a picture of you before I came here.” Eddie told him as they waited for their food. Richie really did order a glass of overpriced whisky while Eddie stuck with his usually iced tea, no lemon.

Richie raised an eyebrow.

“And that didn’t scare you off?

“Shut up” Eddie rolled his eyes.

“So uh ...what'd you think?”

He said it a little nervously, his eyes darting to the side, his usual tell. The change in tone was enough to throw Eddie off.

“Huh?”

“The picture you saw of me, was it love at first sight?” He blinked across the table at him like a cartoon deer. “At least tell me you got a half chub.”

“Fuck off.” Eddie looked at him over his glass. “Honestly I was so focused on trying to remember you I couldn’t form an opinion beyond, why don’t I recognize this asshole?”

“Oh, right. Makes sense.”

What was Eddie supposed to say? That he thought he looked ridiculous? The photos of him online made him look, well, goofy. His hair looked like it had never seen a hairbrush, his shirt was wrinkled, his glasses were almost comically big and extremely unflattering to his eyes which were probably his best feature. Eddie hadn't known at the time that all those things were parts of Richie that made him... *Richie* .

Knowing that those features belonged to one of his best friends, someone he loved, not just married as a joke or on a dare, but properly loved made them all look different.

"If it'll make you stop pouting, I think you've definitely grown into your looks." Eddie diplomatized.

"Aw, you really think so, Eds? Tell me more."

"No, no, no, that's all the stroking your ego is getting from me."

Richie smiled.

"Is my ego the only thing-"

"Beep-beep."

...

They walked out of the restaurant together, after three hours, a few more drinks, and several divisive looks from the waitstaff, laughing and clutching at each others' jackets.

"I can't believe you're actually a comedian," Eddie laughed, stumbling over his feet a little. "When you're so not funny!"

"Yeah, you're right, I'm still pretty sure I'm living my own version of The Truman Show over here."

"Like anyone would watch that." Eddie shot back through more giggles.

Richie just smiled again, he felt like he had smiled more that night than he had in weeks.

As they approached the lobby he spoke up.

“I gotta say, this reunion feels a lot like a first date, shall I walk you back to your place, darlin’?”

It was a joke, a classic Richie Tozier goof complete with his Southern Belle voice, but Eddie’s alcohol addled mind didn’t fully process it.

“I’m actually staying here, in the hotel.”

Richie looked a little taken aback, eyes shifting again.

“Oh, um-”

“That wasn’t a come on, I just wanted to let you know, I’m not going anywhere.” *Not yet.*

Richie takes a breath.

“I’ll ride up with you then?”

Eddie gestures towards the elevators.

“After you.”

Eddie pushed the button for his floor and Richie pushed his, significantly higher, one. They rode up in relative silence, Eddie still swaying and warm.

When it was time for Eddie to leave Richie stuck out an arm, making the doors stay open and Eddie let out a questioning sound.

“Wait, um- before I forget.” He pulled out a card from his wallet. “That’s my number, call me, if you want, I’m off tomorrow so-”

Eddie cut him off and took the card.

“Right, I will.”

“Right.”

“See you, Richie.”

“See you, Eddie.”

Eddie goes down the hall, leaving Richie in the doorway of the elevator.

As he reaches the corner turn he looks back, Richie's still there. Weird. Eddie shook it off though, going to his room to sleep.

It wasn't until after Eddie's head had hit his pillow that he realized he hadn't thought about the divorce papers all evening.

6. Interlude 1991

1991

High school might have just been the best thing to happen to Eddie Kaspbrak.

He had finally hit his own growth spurt, and even though he wasn't nearly as tall as most of his friends he had almost caught up to Bill.

He was taller, but he was also stronger, after years of being told he was too sick and fragile for sports he had decided to try out for the track team in a brief burst of courage. He had made it, in fact he was one of the fastest runners Derry High had ever seen.

The success he had with track meant that he wasn't a target anymore, even though he still sat with the rest of the losers at lunch and in class when possible. He was now kind of untouchable, even on friendly terms with the more popular kids and the seniors who he had always thought would be more likely to break his legs than compliment him on what they were capable of.

So high school was pretty great, he had all of his friends, except Mike, around him everyday, he was able to keep up a solid B average, and he didn't have to constantly worry about being on the receiving end of a wedgie or a push off the bridge.

He knew the rest of the losers didn't feel the same though.

Bill still got picked on, by both teachers and classmates, for his stutter, he could hear the mocking, cruel jeers thrown by classmates and he knew Bill did too.

Stan, whose relationship with his father had never truly recovered after the summer of his Bar Mitzvah, still got hit with the same, tired antisemitism he's been hearing since elementary. But now, the resentment in his heart made it hard for him to even snark back at them.

Mike, when he was able to make it into town, felt much of the same.

Racism in Derry was something that must have run deep in its roots, in the rivers that flowed beneath the surface. It was perpetuated by the people who lived there to the point where the sickening words they said about him sounded like they could be part of the town's anthem.

Richie had it bad too, Eddie could tell, although he never mentioned it, never wanted to make it about him when the others had it so much worse (they were much the same in this way, Eddie thought, because although he was protected from physical violence, he still heard the whispers in the hallways, knew what they said about the boy with the short running shorts and high pitched voice that's never even kissed a girl). Eddie knew by the amount of detentions he racked up that he hadn't gotten any better at knowing when it was okay to talk in class. But Eddie couldn't blame him, he really didn't know any better, and he still got better grades than him, straight A+ report cards he'd seen crumpled in the trash can in Richie's room seemed to mock him. There was just a part of Richie that couldn't stop sometimes, he would fidget or talk up a storm until whatever that part of him was allowed him to stop.

Eddie knew it got him into trouble more often than not, more often than he would say.

And Eddie didn't like that, knowing that there were things Richie didn't want to tell him, but he also knew that was a terribly selfish way to think about his friend.

And the thing was, Richie didn't always have to tell him things, because Eddie already knew most of them.

He knew Richie didn't think he was worth much, that he thought just because he wasn't athletic like Eddie, or studious like Stan, or charismatic like Bill, or quiet and sweet like Mike that they must not like him as much. Eddie tried to tell him, without words that would make him deflect or tell a joke, that that wasn't true. They all loved him, maybe even more than friends had ever loved each other.

He also knew Richie must love him, in a different way, even a little bit, even if he didn't know it himself, it was obvious in the way he looked at him at the end of the finish line, holding a bottle of water,

looking better than any metal or ribbon that he could ever win.

He always smiled, with his maybe too wide mouth, eyes crinkling up behind thick frames, looked at him like maybe Eddie was a prize too, but it was the way he pretended not to look at him that really gave it away.

When Eddie collapsed, legs thrown, spread about the grass, water from the bottle dripping down his chin as he hungrily drank it, Richie saw him wipe sweat from his brow and pretended that he couldn't, that maybe if he didn't he wouldn't feel flushed and his heart wouldn't beat as hard as if he had just ran the race too. Eddie could see him though, red streaked cheeks and ears, he saw the way he couldn't make eye contact with him right away.

It made Eddie feel magical, kind of giddy like he had a secret superpower that only he knew about, he promised, to himself, of course, that he would only use that power for good.

...

"Why don't you ever come to my house?" Eddie asked one summer night.

He and Richie had gone out to the barrens alone after Eddie had shown up to his house, unable to sleep and wanting to get away from everything. Richie had driven them there on his bike, Eddie pressed against his strong back, face cradled in his shoulder blades as they made their way in the dark.

Richie considered the question for a moment before replying, softly.

"I don't want to bother you, Eds."

"Do I bother you?" Eddie asked, more of a challenge than a genuine question.

"What? Of course not... why would you think that?" He seemed baffled.

"Why would you think you would bother me, Rich?"

He didn't respond.

Eddie took a breath.

"You wouldn't, you know that, right? You're always keeping me safe, but I want you to feel safe too."

Richie looked at him like he wanted to say a million things, but he kept his mouth uncharacteristically shut. Eddie could even see the muscle around his jaw clench a little.

After a moment he spoke up.

"It's getting late, I should get you home."

Eddie, as much as he can't believe himself for it, wants to tell him to talk more, tell him that he doesn't mind, probably already knows.

But he doesn't, he just let's Richie help him stand up, enjoying the warmth of his large hand before it's gone too soon.

Richie drove them back a little recklessly, Eddie could feel himself sliding around on the bag rack, arms around Richie's waist, as he wound down the dark streets.

Richie stopped his bike two houses down from Eddie's, his mom was long asleep by now but it didn't hurt to be careful, Eddie didn't even have to ask him, he just did it. The loose gravel crunched underneath the tires as Richie slowed to a halt and Eddie remembered himself.

He unwound his arms from around Richie and got off the bike.

"Thanks." He said, quietly, not wanting to disrupt the calmness of the night.

The only lights were the moon and the light on the handlebars underneath Richie's hands.

"Of course." Richie said. Like a given, and he supposed it was. Richie would always give him a ride home, always walk with him if he didn't have a bike, offer his own house if it was raining too hard. Richie was good that way.

Good to him.

It was Eddie's move, his turn to start walking towards his house and leave Richie to turn his bike around and do the same.

But he didn't.

He just stayed there, looking at his friend. The light of the first quarter moon reflected on his pale face, it made his freckles stand out so much more than usual. The thick glasses magnified his eyes the way they always did but there was something different, Eddie realized, not for the first time, that Richie was kind of beautiful. He also realized, for what might be the first time, that he would really like to kiss him. His heart throbbed at that.

Richie was still looking at him too, maybe a little confused, a little anxious at the prolonged silence, but he still stayed there, wide mouth starting to part in a joke or a question.

Eddie didn't let him.

He pushed his arms over Richie's shoulders to keep him there and pressed his mouth, soft but desperate, against Richie's, swallowing the noise of confusion threatening to escape him.

Eddie was vaguely aware of Richie recovering, planting his feet to the solid ground and pressing one large hand to the small of his back. It was a warm comfort that Eddie appreciated and took as a sign to continue.

They broke apart, breathing heavily.

"Thanks..." Richie said, sounding a little dumbstruck.

"Of course." Eddie said, like a given.

Eddie turned to walk home.

"W-wait, wait, Eds!"

"Yeah?"

“What- I mean, are we...?” He trailed off, at a loss for words.

Eddie couldn't help but laugh.

“Richie Tozier speechless, never thought I'd see the day.”

Richie grinned back at him, looking altogether different and much more like the boy Eddie's known for years.

“Well excuse me,” He dragged out the words. “See I just got kissed by the cutest boy in school so I'm gonna need a few hours for the blood in my dick to make its way back to my brain.”

Eddie laughed through the rising blush on his face. It was crass and it was sweet, and it was so totally Richie.

“I love your laugh.” Richie said, and he really had the dopiest look on his face while he said it.

“Yeah?”

Richie sighed.

“Yeah, I'd do pretty much anything to hear it.”

“Why's that?”

Richie kicked at the gravel on the ground.

“Oh I don't know, guess I love you or some shit.”

Eddie seemed to consider this.

“Well that's good,” He decided. “Because I guess I love you and shit too.”

“Sweet, gimme some skin.” Richie stuck his hand out, going for a low-five.

Eddie gave it to him, hand lingering a second longer than usual, then he turned again, going back to his house.

“See ya, Rich.”

“See ya, Eds.”

When he reached the porch he turned around again and Richie was still there, white light from the moon glinting off of his glasses.

Eddie raised a hand, and so did Richie, then, the crunch of gravel, wheels turning, and he was gone.

Notes for the Chapter:

This chapter was sponsored by this incredible art which inspired me to write all the interludes:

<https://koryandr.tumblr.com/post/188485511880/i-dont-wanna-keep-secrets-just-to-keep-you-and-i>

Let me know how you like the two congruent storylines! I have the rest of the chapters vaguely mapped out but even I can't wait to see where this goes!

7. Chapter 4

Notes for the Chapter:

Hi, it's been a while but I promise I am still working on this, it just took me a little longer than usual to get past these chapters. Let me know what you think!

Eddie woke up to a dry mouth, slight headache, and a perfect memory of the night before.

He turned over in the soft white sheets of the hotel's bed and reached for his phone. It was barely hanging on at 4% after he forgot to plug it in last night.

"Fuck." Eddie whispered, he found the cord, plugged it in, then picked up the business card he had left on the bedside table the night before.

He punched the number in methodically, then sent a text.

Hey, it's Eddie.

The phone started ringing almost immediately.

"Hello?" He says, biting back his usual greeting.

"Eddie..." The voice on the other end breathed. "Oh shit, Eddie! I thought I had fucking dreamed last night, dude....it just didn't seem real."

"Yeah, I know what you mean..." Eddie's eyes fell on his briefcase from across the room. "Hey, are you busy? I have something to show you."

"Well, geez sweetheart, it's barely nine o'clock, give me a chance to freshen up."

"Shut up! I actually have something to show you and my phone's almost dead so just meet me here, okay? Room 457."

Richie let out a low whistle.

“How did I ever forget the charming ways you command me to do your bidding?”

“I’m hanging up now.” Eddie told him, but there’s already a smile tugging at his lips.

“Wait, wait. I’ll come down! I really do have to shower first though, give me like ten minutes.”

“See you soon.”

Eddie realized as he hung up that he should probably take a shower as well. He’s been living straight out of his suitcase, but he takes the time to straighten up the only mess in the room, the sleep-rumpled sheets and comforter he had just gotten out of, then pops in the shower.

It’s scalding hot and efficient, he’s done in about 3 minutes, and afterwards he dresses, in a new pair of jeans and a light yellow polo shirt, probably his favorite, and he blow dries and combs his hair into submission as he always does.

Then he waited

Eddie didn’t even bother to check his phone or work emails, they’re going to be piling up anyway and he has other things to focus on.

He tried to sit down and wait, but then he felt odd, like he was sitting for a portrait, so he got up, moved around the room, wiped off the mirrors, picked at the room service menu, and finally, he heard a knock at the door.

He may have gotten there a little too quickly, but eagerness was not something he felt he needed to hide. Seeing Richie again, knowing he was real, and there with him, that was much more important.

“Hey.”

“Hey.”

They took a minute, just looked at each other. Maybe it was to realize this was still real and happening, maybe it was something else.

Richie's hair was still damp, but it wasn't long enough to tie back, like it had been in highschool, so it just hangs around his face, droplets running down his neck and onto the fabric of his grey novelty t-shirt.

"You wanted to show me something?" Richie said, breaking Eddie out of his thoughts.

"Y-yeah, right, um come in." He moved away, leaving space for Richie to walk past him into the room, which he does. "Did you want anything, cup of coffee?"

He gestured to the hotel standard coffee maker, but Richie declines.

"Already had some."

He looked at Eddie expectedly and Eddie remembered what he was doing there.

He shuffled around Richie, gesturing for him to sit down, which he does. Eddie opened his briefcase and pulls out the stack of papers, setting most of them behind him when he fishes out the marriage certificate and presents it to Richie.

"No way!" He said, suddenly excited and wide awake. "April 14th, I remember that! It was so hot there we were way overdressed, wearing like 5 sweaters each..."

He looked over the piece of paper for a long time, Eddie wondered what he was seeing in it. Finally he spoke up again.

"Stan and Bill..."

Eddie's eyebrows wrinkled together.

"Huh?"

Richie turned the paper towards him, finger underneath the witness

line, and Eddie's eyes followed the movement.

There, written on the lines below their own names were Stanley Uris and Bill Denbrough.

"Oh my god, Stan and Bill!"

They looked at each other for a beat and then they moved apart, Richie pulling out his phone, and Eddie his laptop. Quickly they tried to search for some information about their old forgotten friends. Eddie felt the frantic energy very similar to his Google-ing and plane ticket buying frenzy after he had gotten back from the county clerk's office.

"Found him!" And for some reason Eddie knew he meant Stan, and not Bill who he had automatically started with.

Richie had found Stan by typing his name into Google, simple as that, after a few minutes of sifting through the obituaries and Facebook profiles, he finds him, he's listed as the administration and finance manager of the Atlanta Audubon Society. All Richie could think was, *yeah that sounds like Stan* .

As for Eddie, a search for Bill Denbrough brought up a lot of nothing, but *William* Denbrough was exactly what he was looking for. William Denbrough, *b.1976* Derry, ME.

He had really done it, become a big time author, and *horror novels* no less! Eddie sat in front of his computer, looking at the picture of his childhood best friend, a phrase that when connected with him still seems a little out of focus and blurry, and tried to remember. And he can't really, remember, anything about him at all, the picture, the headshot, is of a stranger, a stranger with blue eyes and red hair pulled back in a ponytail that he is *so* going to get made fun of for once Richie sees it....

"Found him."

Richie made a questioning noise in the back of his throat, but his eyes were still locked on his phone, no doubt looking for any kind of contact information on him.

Eddie did the same and found an agent's phone number and an email address. An email with his phone number was sent, and Eddie considered grabbing his phone, but when he looked up Richie was already in the middle of making a call.

It must have gone to voicemail because Richie looked a little panicked before he started talking, stilted and unrehearsed.

"Hi! Stan...This is Richie, I- I found you! I mean, this is Richie, from Derry. Listen I'm here with Eddie and um, give me a call back? Thanks!"

"What the fuck was that?"

"That was me trying my best, what did you do?"

"I sent an email, with actual words that make sense!"

Richie looked at him, trying to feign annoyance, but soon enough he's laughing, and Eddie's joining in.

Eddie pushed his laptop away and laughed into his hands, when he looked up Richie had stopped.

Richie was looking behind him, and for a shocked, horrified moment Eddie thinks he must have seen the divorce papers in their names.

Before he could stop him, Richie leaned over and grabbed the paper on top of the file.

And laughed again.

"Oh, man! Eds, you look like such a dweeb here, can you believe actual government officials let this guy get married?"

He was holding a copy of his highschool drivers license, which he had forgotten he had a copy of. Eddie knew it wasn't exactly a flattering picture, who's is?

"Yeah, yeah, laugh it up! I distinctly remember you being dressed as a Kurt Cobain wannabe as we signed the papers."

“It was a tribute! The news just broke, how dare you!”

Eddie rolled his eyes good naturedly.

“Sorry, is it still too soon?”

“Never will enough time pass.”

Then, he looked over at the stack again, but he didn’t laugh that time.

Eddie turned his head to follow his gaze and saw the now uncovered divorce papers.

He flushed suddenly, looked back at Richie who still wasn’t saying anything. The light mood of the day was broken and Eddie wanted to kick himself for being the cause.

His words were out faster than he could think.

“I’m sorry, Richie, I didn’t want you to find out this way. I was gonna tell you, I promise, but I couldn’t figure out how and then, Stan and Bill! I didn’t know when or how to-”

“Hey, Eddie, Eds, calm down it sounds like you’re reaching a boil!” Richie tried to smile at him.

Eddie scowled.

Richie took his hands in his.

“Seriously, it’s fine, okay?” He met Eddie’s eyes, trying to convince him with his gaze.

“Okay...” Eddie did not feel convinced.

Richie looked at the papers, all the papers, then back at Eddie. He was quiet for a moment, looking at Eddie but not quite seeing him.

“Hey, I’m not working today, do you want to hang out? We can grab some lunch, I’ll show you around the strip?”

Eddie looked back at him, trying to figure out what might be going

on in his head. He had just found out that the only reason Eddie was there was because he was planning on divorcing him, planning on divorcing him to marry someone else. He knew all of that and he was responding with the same amount of attention that would have been given if he had found out that Eddie had a hipster phase.

But no, that's not exactly true because that would come with a whole lot more teasing and jokes. And yeah, he and Richie had been friends for a long time before they started dating and got married, but there has to be some sort of emotional connection for him there, right? Even with the seventeen year gap they're still...

What?

Even if there were some lingering feelings between the two of them, and with the melted, morphing memories and emotions that keep coming back up, it was really hard to tell, it's not like anything could happen. Eddie's mind strayed, back to the thought of Myra, the knowledge that he had left her, told her he was taking care of something, and before that promised to commit his life to her. He couldn't hurt her like this, god knows how or even if she would be able to handle it.

No, he couldn't do it, couldn't even think of it, he was a different person now, a fully grown adult and not even Richie was making him feel bad, or holding him accountable for what must have been a stupid teenage mistake. Even if they thought they loved each other back then, even if they thought they had known... They couldn't have, not really. Right?

...

Richie did end up showing him around the strip. Once Eddie's phone was charged a reasonable amount, he grabbed it and his jacket and headed out into the world with him.

It was a lot of Richie telling him about all the times he had been drunk or done something stupid, or both, at any given location, and the line between friends and whatever luckily didn't blur as often as Eddie had worried it would.

At one point they pass under the Stratosphere and Richie points up to the barely visible roller coaster on top with an eyebrow raised.

“There’s no way in hell you’re getting me anywhere near that thing.”

He just laughed.

They walked past the New York New York and Eddie must have made a face because Richie spoke up.

“Nothing like the real thing, huh?”

“Yeah, not even comparable really.”

“So you ended up liking it?” Richie asked. “New York? The Big Apple?”

He finishes it off with a really bad Brooklyn accent.

“Well, I’m still there so...”

Richie nodded.

“Oh man, I used to beg you not to go, do you remember? I spent so much time trying to convince you to go to California with me, but you were always so stubborn. Good thing though, I guess, huh?”

“I don’t know, maybe I should have listened to you, I could be raking in that sweet D-list celebrity alimony right now.”

“Ha!” Richie let out a surprised laugh. “Yeah, you really missed out there.”

Richie got quiet.

“Sorry if I’m... Acting weird or whatever it’s just, when I talk to you-”

“It’s like we’re still eighteen?”

“Yeah.” Richie sighed. “Is that a bad thing?”

“No, it’s just... It’s been 17 years, everything’s changed.”

“Has this?” Richie grabbed his hand.

“No.” Eddie sighed, feeling Richie’s hand around his, and cursing it for feeling so good. “It hasn’t, but... Richie, I mean, you know why I’m here.”

Eddie hasn’t really said it out loud, hasn’t put a pen in his hand and told him where to sign. But that’s only because he doesn’t want to ruin the good time they’ve been having and, more privately, Eddie thinks, because that would make everything too real.

He tried to look sympathetic, and knows he fails.

“Hey, let’s not think about that, okay?” Richie changed the subject quickly. “Stan got back to me, he and his wife actually booked a flight out here for tomorrow, can you believe it?”

Eddie could.

Maybe they were crazy, but there was something about all of them, the memories of them, the way they forgot and remembered. There must be something about them, or maybe they were just that close that they would drop everything for each other, after seventeen years. Eddie wondered if other people had friends like that...he certainly hadn’t met any so far.

He can remember his years back in Derry clearer now, for the most part. A lot of it was fuzzy but he can remember Richie now, and in remembering him he can also remember Bill and Stan.

Less clear, but still there, always in the peripheral, always inseparable, the four of them.

Four ...something about that gave Eddie pause.

8. Interlude 1992

Notes for the Chapter:

and the second part! i have way too much fun with these interludes, guys

1992

Mr. Tozier arrived late and sat down to eat still wearing his dental scrubs which Richie knows his mom hates, he didn't even seem to notice that Eddie's there as he droned on a little tiredly about the killer double root canal he had to do last minute. After a few bites, he straightened up, a little sheepish and looked around for the first time that night. He looked at Eddie, nervous beyond all else, Richie, embarrassed and expectant, and Maggie Tozier, mostly amused, a little annoyed.

"Oh, I'm sorry Eddie, I didn't realize you were joining us for dinner." And it wasn't that weird, under any other circumstance it would be completely normal for Eddie to be there, but usually there would be at least one the other losers there too, Bill or Stan or Mike. Mike was always his parents' favorite, because he's newer and they haven't had the chance to overhear him cursing or taking part in one of Richie's dumb pranks, but honestly it's probably more because he's always sickeningly polite and offers to help clean up afterwards.

Eddie has kind of frozen up, Mr. Tozier didn't notice but Richie did and he kind of clears his throat and that doesn't have an effect either so Mrs. Tozier takes pity on him and helps him out.

"Honey, Richie has something to tell you." She announced.

Wentworth looked up from his forkful of green beans to his son, expectantly.

"I invited Eddie to dinner," Richie was struggling for the right words, and all Eddie could do was look at him with his wide brown eyes. "because he's my boyfriend... Just wanted to let you know, you know in case he corners you afterwards to ask for my hand, you know he's

real old fashion like that, my Eds. Comes from a real good family though, and he doesn't even care tha' my dowry ain't nothin' but a few chickens and Grandmama's silver because he loves me, Pa, he really loves me."

Eddie was still looking at him when he finished but he had turned red at some point during his outburst.

"Well, as long as you know what you're getting into, Eddie." Wentworth replied, a bemused smile on his face.

"I think I can handle him, Mr.Tozier." Eddie smiled back.

"Oh, do you mean it? Do you really mean it, Pa? Oh, Eds let's have a spring weddin' we can do it right in that little church on the edge of town-"

"Alright, Richard, that's enough. Eat your food, you're embarrassing him."

Dinner passed without any more excitement after that. Richie went to help his mom put the dishes in the dishwasher while he left Eddie at the mercy of his dad's more in depth stories about a botched filling he'd had to clean up.

Weirdly, Eddie didn't mind hearing about medical stuff when it was coming from Mr.Tozier. He talked about his job in a very methodical way that made Richie's eyes glaze over most of the time, but Eddie enjoyed hearing about the intricacies of dental amalgam versus composite fillings. If it weren't for the practical application part of the job involving literally sticking your hands into strangers' mouths Eddie would be considering a future career in dentistry after so many years of listening intently to his stories.

Still, Richie's return from the kitchen was a welcome interruption.

"Hey."

"Hey," He replied, face all dopey smile at seeing him and his dad mid-chat on the couch. "We're gonna go hang out in my room."

"Keep the door open."

Richie rolled his eyes from behind his father's back.

"Don't worry, we'll try to keep our hands off of each other for one night."

"Richie!" Eddie exclaimed, embarrassed.

"What?"

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Tozier." He apologized, moving to push Richie towards his own bedroom.

"It's alright, I'm the one who raised him." Wentworth replied, putting on his glasses to properly watch the news.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

But Richie didn't get an answer, Eddie easily maneuvered him out of the living room and into the hall.

"You're lucky you're cute." Eddie told him, pushed him against the door to his room, and kissed him.

Richie kissed back, sweetly and softly. He was, as much as he hated to admit it, pretty nervous about dinner and was still privately celebrating how well it had gone.

Eddie broke the kiss to open the door, making Richie stumble slightly into his own room, Eddie laughed softly against his neck, making him feel warm and melty, before leaving him to lay on the bed.

Richie left the door open, just slightly, as instructed and listened to the soft sounds of the evening news carry through the house. Eddie was already looking comfortable on his bed, making grabby hands at him, a big secret grin on his face, and who was Richie to deny him?

He joined him on the bed, crawling over Eddie with all of his long limbs and reconnecting their lips. Even though it had been awhile since they got together the making out was a relatively new and welcome addition. The first awkward time they had really done it Eddie didn't think he'd be able to leave Richie's room ever again, even with the bumped noses and cut on his tongue from Richie's

braces. Eddie still kind of thought he might never get enough of Richie, not ever.

The air in the room was warm and heavy when Richie broke the kiss again.

“What. Has. Gotten. Into. You.” He punctuated each word with a kiss somewhere else on Eddie’s face and neck, making him giggle.

“Oh Rich, you know it’s gets me all hot and bothered when your dad starts talking about dental hygiene.”

Richie spluttered, indignant.

“Dude, not cool!”

Eddie tried to give him an unimpressed look, smile still pulling at the corners of his mouth.

“I’ve literally spent the last 4 years of my life listening to you talk about fucking my mom, I’m allowed a little fun.”

“I’ll show you a little fun.”

“Ooh, just a little?” Eddie teased. “At least I can’t accuse you of making a promise your dick can’t cash.”

Richie looked at him for a long moment, face still flushed and lips still reddened.

He burst into hideous laughter, which made Eddie laugh too.

After, when they had both calmed down, Richie wrapped his arms around Eddie’s back, pulling him against his chest.

“I really am gonna marry you one day.” He whispered against his hair in a way that made Eddie unsure about whether or not it was meant for him.

Still he looked up, meeting Richie’s eyes, suddenly sullen.

“Don’t joke about that.”

“I’m not joking, I mean it!”

“Richie...” Eddie's eyes weren't angry anymore, just sad.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to make you upset. I thought you felt the same”

Richie sounded smaller than ever, and Eddie knows he just gets that way sometimes. Doesn't feel like he's good or worthy or other stupid things like that, all Eddie can do is try everyday to convince him otherwise.

“I know, and I do, it just...makes me sad to think about.”

“What?” He looked genuinely confused.

“Come on, Richie. You know we’ll never actually be able to, it just...fucking bums me out to think about things I can’t have, okay?”

“Okay.” He said, but it didn't sound like he really agreed, just that he was thinking it over.

Eddie went back to lying against his chest, head full of tumultuous thoughts.